

Message Text

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PAGE 01 USUN N 01293 222103Z

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ACTION IO-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AF-06 ARA-06 EA-06 EUR-12 NEA-09

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN 1293

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TAGS: PFOR, EAID, SREF, UN, US, CB

SUBJECT: CALL BY GKR AMB. CHHUT CHHOEUR ON AMBASSADOR BENNETT,
APRIL 21

REFS: (A) USUN 1235; (B) USUN 1232; (C) STATE 90605

(D) STATE 84161

SUMMARY: GKR AMB. CHHUT CHHOEUR HAS MADE DIGNIFIED APPROACH TO AMB. BENNETT TO UNDERLINE UNCERTAIN FUTURE FACING CAMBODIANS IN US AND ELSEWHERE ABROAD WHO, FOR POLITICAL REASONS, ARE UNABLE TO RETURN TO CAMBODIA. NONE OF 8 OFFICIALS AND SOME 40 DEPENDENTS CONNECTED WITH GKR MISSION TO UN FEEL ABLE TO RETURN TO CAMBODIA IN SAFETY AND ALL WANT TO REMAIN IN US. AMB. CHHUT MOST UNDERSTANDABLY IS INTERESTED IN LEARNING ABOUT POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE FOR KHMERS WHO ELECT TO REMAIN IN THE US OR ELSEWHERE ABROAD. ADDITIONALLY, HE URGED THAT USG APPEAL TO THAIS TO OPEN BORDER TO REFUGEES FROM CAMBODIA. AMB. BENNETT, WHO EXPRESSED MOST PROFOUND SYMPATHY OVER PLIGHT OF CAMBODIANS, SAID HE WOULD INQUIRE IN WASHINGTON FOR INFORMATION ON POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE FOR KHMERS. END SUMMARY.

1. GKR AMB. CHHUT CHHOEUR IN DEEPLY CONCERNED BUT DIGNIFIED
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 USUN N 01293 222103Z

APPROACH APRIL 21 ASKED AMB. BENNETT ABOUT U.S. ASSISTANCE TO

KHMERS. AMB. CHHUT OBSERVED THAT THE U.S. PRESS AND CONGRESS WERE GIVING MUCH ATTENTION TO U.S. RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD VIETNAM, BUT HE HAD SEEN OR HEARD VERY LITTLE WITH RESPECT TO U.S. INTEREST IN PROBLEMS FACING THE KHMER PEOPLE. HE ASKED ABOUT U.S. POLICY ON CAMBODIAN RELIEF. HE ALSO REVIEWED HIS APRIL 15 CONVERSATION WITH SYG WALDHEIM (REFTEL A) AND ASKED IF, GIVEN THE CHANGED SITUATION IN PHNOM PENH, THE U.S. PLANS TO CONTRIBUTE TO UN AGENCIES SENDING RELIEF TO CAMBODIA.

2. AFTER EXPRESSING PROFOUND SYMPATHY FOR THE PLIGHT OF CAMBODIANS, AMB. BENNETT REPLIED THAT, BEFORE THE FALL OF PHNOM PENH, SYG WALDHEIM WAS ADVISED THAT THE U.S., WHICH WAS DEVOTING MAJOR EFFORTS TO CARE OF REFUGEES IN INDOCHINA, WOULD MAKE RELIEF CONTRIBUTIONS TO COUNTRIES IN INDOCHINA MAINLY ON A BILATERAL BASIS (REFTEL B). SINCE FALL OF PHNOM PENH, THE SITUATION WAS UNDER REVIEW, BUT AT THE MOMENT USUN HAD VERY LITTLE HARD INFORMATION. AMB. BENNETT ALSO NOTED CONTENTS OF REFTEL C.

3. ON PROBLEM OF CAMBODIANS STRANDED OUTSIDE CAMBODIA, CHHUT CHHOEUR MADE POINT THAT FOR FIRST TIME IN THEIR HISTORY KHMERS ARE BEING FORCED TO EMIGRATE AND THEREFORE THEY WILL FACE SPECIAL PROBLEMS. HE ASKED IF USG CONSIDERING A PROGRAM TO HELP THOSE KHMERS ELECTING TO REMAIN IN US TO ADJUST TO THEIR UNPRECEDENTED SITUATION. BENNETT SAID HE WOULD INQUIRE OF WASHINGTON TO TRY TO GET HIM SOME INFORMATION. CHHUT CHHOEUR ALSO ASKED IF UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR) WAS PLANNING ACTION TO AID IN RESETTLEMENT OF KHMERS STRANDED OUTSIDE CAMBODIA WHO CHOSE NOT TO RETURN OR MANAGED SOMEHOW TO ESCAPE ACROSS THE THAI BORDER.

4. CHHUT CHHOEUR NOTED THAT GOVERNMENT OF THAILAND (GOT) HAS CLOSED ITS BORDERS WITH CAMBODIA, DENYING POSSIBILITY OF ESCAPE TO THOSE KHMERS WHO RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY FEEL THAT THEIR LIVES ARE IN JEOPARDY SHOULD THEY REMAIN IN CAMBODIA. HE ASKED IF THE USG HAD DISCUSSED THIS WITH GOT AND CHHUT REGISTERED PERSONAL PLEA THAT WE INTERCEDE WITH GOT AND FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS ASK GOT NOT TO CLOSE BORDER TO CAMBODIANS FLEEING FOR THEIR LIVES.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 USUN N 01293 222103Z

5. CHHUT SAID HE AND THE SEVEN OTHER MEMBERS OF GKR MISSION BELIEVE IT WOULD BE POLITICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO RETURN TO CAMBODIA. HE HAD INTERVIEWED EACH MEMBER OF THE STAFF; THEY INDICATED THAT, IF ALLOWED, THEY INTENDED TO REMAIN IN US. WITH FAMILIES IT MAKES A CAMBODIAN GROUP OF FORMER OFFICIALS IN NEW YORK NUMBERING 45 TO 50 PEOPLE.

6. CAMBODIAN MISSION STAFF IS PREPARING TO VACATE THE MISSION. FUNDS AVAILABLE TO CHHUT CHHOEUR WERE SUFFICIENT ONLY TO PAY STAFF SALARIES FOR MONTH OF APRIL AND TO PAY RENT ON MISSION OFFICE SPACE ONLY UNTIL THE END OF APRIL. HE SAID HE & OTHER MISSION MEMBERS ARE LOOKING FOR JOBS. CHHUT SAID IT IS HIS INTENTION TO LEAVE THE BALANCE OF FUNDS (ESTIMATED BY CHHUT AT BETWEEN \$3 AND \$6 THOUSAND) IN THE OFFICIAL ACCOUNT AND TO LEAVE BEHIND OFFICE FURNITURE AND FIXTURES WHICH BELONG TO GOVERNMENT OF CAMBODIA.

7. PURSUANT REFTTEL D, USUN PREPARING FULL BIOGRAPHIC MATERIAL ON CAMBODIAN MISSION.
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